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DEPT FOR DRL, INL, AND EUR/SCE, NSC FOR BRAUN, USUN FOR
DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER

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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: SEJDIU AHEAD IN THE HOME STRETCH

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: With all local branch elections now complete, Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu has a comfortable majority of delegates to be elected president of the ruling Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). Sejdiu's chief rival, disgraced former Assembly Speaker Nexhat Daci, trails by a wide margin. We hear disconcerting reports that Daci supporters continue to pressure delegates to switch their allegiance from Sejdiu to Daci, but are reasonably confident this will not affect the outcome. The date of the LDK convention has not yet been set; though Minister of Culture and LDK Presidency member Astrit Haraqija has suggested the party hold the convention on December 23, the party's 17th anniversary, other more authoritative figures suggest it will be held in the first two weeks of December. Sejdiu, who cannot be both the President of Kosovo and LDK party leader, will most likely relinquish day-to-day party duties, and most think first deputy LDK president and Prizren Mayor Egrem Kryeziu will take on that role. END SUMMARY.

Sejdiu Has The Delegates

12. (SBU) After nearly two months of elections in party branches, sub-branches, and "actives," Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu has, by our count, secured the support of 200 of the 344 delegates selected thus far. There will be 356 delegates total and, though estimates vary, most predict that Sejdiu has already surpassed the 179 (50 percent plus one) required to win the party presidency. Ousted Kosovo Assembly president Nexhat Daci has 111 delegates, and 32 others are undecided, while the results of diaspora branch elections, with 12 delegates total, are still unknown.

Daci Appears Defeated, Gashi Tries to Run

13. (SBU) Despite the best efforts of Daci's thugs to intimidate delegates since the process began in September--some branch elections had to be re-run and/or were disrupted violently -- no one seriously doubts that Sejdiu will be elected the next president of LDK. In related news, recent media reports suggest that LDK caucus head Alush Gashi has thrown his hat in the ring and is attempting, with limited success thus far, to drum up support to run as a candidate at

the convention. (Comment: LDK internal rules say any candidate must collect the signatures of at least 100 delegates, making Gashi's candidacy a highly unlikely prospect. End Comment.)

Convention Timing

¶4. (SBU) There is no strict rule on the timing of the LDK convention, but the party's Steering Council recommended it be within a month of the last branch election, which would put it in the second week of December. Minister of Culture and LDK Presidency member Astrit Haraqija has suggested the party hold the convention on its 17th anniversary, December 23, which would give both candidates six weeks to prepare for the convention vote. Other, more authoritative LDK figures, however, including Sejdiu's adviser Skender Hyseni, understand the value of holding the convention while Sejdiu's support is running strong, and say it will likely be held the first week or two in December. Delegates at the convention will also elect an 81-member policy-making steering council.

Kryeziu As Sejdiu Stand-In?

¶5. (C) Under Kosovo's Constitutional Framework, the same person may not serve as both party president and president of Kosovo. If Sejdiu wins, he will likely choose to remain president of Kosovo. In a similar situation, the late Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova, given his stature, "froze" the position of LDK president and essentially ran both the party and Kosovo. Sejdiu would not be able to do this, but would likely relinquish day-to-day duties to the first deputy president, also to be voted on at the convention. Most think Prizren Mayor Eqrem Kryeziu, currently first deputy president, will be re-elected and take on this role. Other

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possible contenders for the three deputy president positions include LDK Presidency member and MP Sabri Hamiti, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government Lutfi Haziri, and Assembly Speaker Kule Berisha.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Although not a pretty sight, local LDK branch elections have finally been completed and the outcome appears clearly in favor of the moderate, unifying figure of President Sejdiu. That is good news. The convention hopefully will produce an LDK ceasefire during the critical months before final status resolution. But it is unclear whether President Sejdiu (or his surrogate) can unite the fractured LDK party, still struggling to find itself in the aftermath of President Rugova's death. END COMMENT.

¶7. (SBU) U.S. Office Pristina clears this cable in its entirety for release to U.N. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari. YAZDGERDI